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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

It never fails! Take a vacation to work outdoors, and it rains! I was lucky in that I was able to get a great deal of work done this past week, despite the weather. There's still plenty to do, but I am making progress. Too bad our pal Joe can't appreciate the satisfaction derived from this kind of activity. Well, some people just don't like to get their hands dirty, playing in the dirt! <vbg>

It's been a fairly quiet and relaxing week, otherwise. No work pressure or stress. I would have preferred the weather to be nicer, but I guess you can't get everything you want, when you want it! Nothing out there in the technology world fazed me enough to write about this week. The only item that did strike me somewhat is learning that the anti-spam bill being currently debated seems to be weakening. I think these politicians need to all set up e-mail accounts and see just how much "fun" it is receiving lots of unsolicited e-mail crap - and then trying to get themselves taken off of these distribution lists. Then, maybe something more potent will come about. We'll see how this one pans out.

Until next time...

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Fun Media

Hello,

A new version of Fun Media is out.

This version of the great video editing software by Patrick Eickhoff fixes a few problems with MagiC.

Fun Media webpage:
http://www.europe-shareware.org/atari/logiciels/fun%20media.html

Bye,

P. Ricard (ES)
--
Europe Shareware http://www.europe-shareware.org

MagiC SDK

Hello,

MagiC SDK

Europe Shareware is now able to offer a complete software development kit for MagiC to all the programmers. This package includes:

o either MagiC Atari or MagiC Mac or MagiC PC, with paper manual
o The GCC kit
o GCC Shell, registered version
o Resource Master, registered version, with paper manual
o Windom libraries with its printed documentation (200 pages)
o EZ Edit text editor (with syntax "colourisation")
o Many development libraries
o Many development tools

All this for only 75.00 Euros !

This offer is for developers only. To have the advantage of this offer, you must tell us which MagiC compatible programme you have made in the past 24 months or which one you are going to produce in the next 12 months.

Have a look at the MagiC SDK page:

http://www.europe-shareware.org/atari/logiciels/magic_sdk.html

Bye,

P. Ricard (ES)
--
Europe Shareware http://www.europe-shareware.org

[When asked about availability...]

>>This offer is for developers only. To have the advantage of this
>>offer, you must tell us which MagiC compatible programme you have made
>>in the past 24 months or which one you are going to produce in the
>>next 12 months.

>Why so restrictive?

Because this offer is only for developers.
The customer price for MagiC is 99.00 Euros (Aniplayer registered version included).

So, with the MagiC SDK at only 75.00 Euros all the customers would prefer to buy the MagiC SDK.

But the MagiC SDK is only for active developers or beginners who want to produce softwares for MagiC.

Every coder can contact directly the Europe Shareware staff to lower these restrictions, but you've to show that you're here to create softwares in the short-term.
We're open to discussion, don't hesitate to contact us !

--
Sylvain Perchaud

Europe Shareware -
premier distributeur de logiciels Atari
http://www.europe-shareware.org
http://www.chez.com/europeshareware/

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I hope that Dana is enjoying his vacation. Lord knows that I will when mine comes 'round. Of course, my landlord takes care of the yard work around here, so I won't have the "pleasure" of dealing with the grass-cutting and raking and digging in good ol' Mother Earth but that's okay... I'll survive. <grin>

I'm going to keep my intro short this week. I've got just one short question, I'll dump my thoughts about it on you, and then we'll get on with the news and stuff.

The question is simply this: Has everyone in the world forgotten about cause and effect?

It seems that each and every day I see examples of people who either don't seem to understand that there is an effect for every action, or that they are in some way "special" and the law of cause and effect do not apply to them.

The funny thing is that it's such a simple concept. Even a child understands the rudiments of it... If you do something, it changes something and then something else must be done... and so on.

Maybe we're all too busy with everything that's going on these days. Or maybe we just don't care anymore. I prefer to think that some of us still understand and abide by the law of cause and effect, and that we can show others, by our example, that there is a consequence for each and every action... a price to pay and a responsibility.

No, I don't make the right decision every time. None of us do. And, speaking for myself, if I was a big league ball player I would have been kicked down to the minors long ago for having such a low "batting average". As with most things in life, I get the feeling that the

trying is more important that the succeeding. It’s the struggle that’s important, along with what we learn along the way.

Okay, I’ve already spent more time on this that I had planned on. Let’s get to the STuff from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Chris Wilkinson posts this about a benchmark he tried:

A benchmark on a website somewhere (?) gives a POV-Ray benchmark for different CPU’s. I thought I would give it a spin on my Falcon, but the results were VERY disappointing!

The command line is...

+A +Ifish13.pov +Ofish.tga +W720 +H486 +L(include path etc...)

If you use the Archimedium 030+882 version of POV 3.1g (gcc) it takes over 70 hours, and equates as slower than a bloody 386DX33. The 386 does 8 pixels/sec average and my Falcon is less than 1.5 pixels/sec! What the hell is wrong here!! I was led to believe that a 030/882 combo would be clock equivalent in float math to a 486DX, yet this is NOT true obviously. Can anyone else give me some light on this? Does a PureC compile work faster perhaps?

PS. A Silicon Graphics machine I am looking at on ebay is about 800 times faster than my Falcon with this benchmark, for little more than about US $400!"

"Janez" tells Chris:

"1st, benchmarks are NEVER adequate! Falcon WILL perform bad on any standard test, i mean bad compared to enormous raw CPU power machines have today, but on ct2 Falcon play mp3 slicker than my pals G3 mac, etc etc. Falcon is VERY weird machine and thats why i love it so much.

Can u tell me any other machine to perform as APEX does, like CAF does, like Falcamp does (+ many others) on plain 16mhz?? BE proud, not disappointed! (i really really really suggest u watch latest EIL" winner demo named "hmmm" all in there is REALTIME and Amigas need 060 for similar results (better) and Pcs need 3d card!! Falcon is happy with 4mb and 16mhz!! I’m proud to have such machine and that we have such genius coders!!)

Then again, gcc and windoze/macos apps are NOT optimized at all, those guys have no clue what optimization is, for them optimization means "go and buy athlon" and that makes another prob for our good old 030. Fine example of that are Falcamp (ppl said its impossible) or great Nocrews mp2 player which takes less as 1% cpu on plain Falcon, and their latest replayer took LESS time with mp2 as DSP MOD replayers! To be better, at rates above 160kb/s mp2 sounds better as mp2 while file sizes are same approximately...

In my humble opinion, what’s wrong is that u compare CPU’s rather than machines.. 030 is actually in terms of CPU power opponent to 386 (if we

can look that way) and 486 FPU unit is quite good actually! U should look on machine as integrated machine... FPU stuff will work better on 486, but mp3's can play on plain falcy etc... Also Photline was compared to Photoshop on 486/100 and author of test (Photoshop user) said they are approximately equal speed...

Povray itself do not make Falcon bad, esp since whole machine is imho a lot more usable as 386, 486 even... Also u mention an 33mhz 386... so double clock and raytrace is task which mainly rely on CPU clock. OK it also depends how many instructions CPU does in one cycle etc.. still 030/386 are CPU's from same era.. And i think Intel's FPU wasn't bad compared to 882 at all...

Also i think your version of Povray is slow. My version of Povray 3.1 completed the task in 3h 56mins on ct2, which makes it 25pixels per second. Also i need to mention that i render that pic in MiNT, while i used computer normally as ever, which means i had 3 vcons opened, and ircing in one, did some ftping and mail/news reading reply in other, on AES i did browse some pages, even play some mp2 files etc.. also had some idle time, cause of TV watching.. so that time could be considerably lower as well.

If u divide my time with factor 3 maybe 4, u can get time it would be needed on plain Falcon, but that proly is not totally correct value...

Bottom line: U have slow version of Povray, and Falcon is NOT raytracing station. Also it is not 68030 ONLY machine, but a Falcon :) (u can not do, i don't mean u can do it slow, but can NOT do,certain things on 386, but u can do easily on Falcon.. opposite that rule doesn't apply.

What can i say, Falcon is not GFX station. Sell it, get SGI."

Joe Blenkle asks about a favorite Atari BBS program:

"I recently found the old ST-Keep BBS program on the net. I remember using this many years ago.

When you run the configuration program it has a place for a registration number - Does anyone out there know what the registration number might be?

I know you can install games as DOORS, but I can't seem to do it. I am guessing unregistered versions do not offer the DOORS feature."

Steve Sweet tells Joe:

"I doubt its legally publicly available, its probably available after paying its author a registration fee.

Is there any mention in the attendant docs?"

Jeff Mitchell tells Joe:

"The source was released a few years back (long after the bbs scene died); I've already given the URL to Joe. Does this imply there is no longer a registration possibility? Likely..

Anyone have a registration to share?

Joe: You're sure you can't hack it in the source? It was GFA,

should be easy to hack up?

There’s also Fortress-ST and STadel (though STadel was weakest of the bunch, it is free, source available in C, and the same as the other 30 or 40 variants of Citadel). I liked STKeep and Fortress in their day, so maybe Fortress is worth looking at?

Maybe STadel is best, since it could network with all the other citadels, and I’d bet there are at least a few citadels (cita88 standard or whatever it was) still around. I know Cita/ux (unix, original port) is still in use.."

"Jonk" asks about the status of the Milan:

"Is Milan dead? The Milan homepage has not been updated since 1998 from what I see. (at least the English pages) Does anyone know if they ever released the Milan II? (060)"

Matthias Jaap tells Jonk:

"I don’t know where you got that "last update date" from but look at the bottom of the page:
"Last updated on: Saturday, March 3, 2001". The page hasn’t been updated with news on the Milan III since the "early announcement policy" seemed to be a bad idea. The Milan II was canceled a while ago for various reasons."

Michael Schwingen adds:

"The Milan II was cancelled due to problems with the availability of a key component, and because a re-design would have come too late on a now too small market.

The Milan I is still available both with 68040 and with 68060 CPU."

Thaddeus Olczyk asks about reading Atari floppies on a PC:

"I have a few (important) Atari ST formatted disk.
Know of any program that will allow me to read them from a PC?"

Frank Zimmerman tells Thaddeus to try...

"Gemulator Explorer. You can download it for free on the Gemulator website (http://www.emulators.com)."

Edward Baiz adds:

"What TOS did the Atari computer this disk came from have? If the TOS was 1.4 or better, then you should be able to insert the disk right in the PC and have it read. If it was less than 1.4, then you might try a ST emulator. I have heard some Atari disks can be read on a PC going this route."

Tomasz Mazur adds his thoughts:

"You can use "makedisk" to convert an Atari floppy disk to .st or .msa image.

Than you can view files in any ST-emulator and copy to hard disk.
The address is: http://makedisk.atari.org.

You should run program 'in real DOS mode'."

Steve Stupple asks for help with an unhappy Happy Cartridge:

"Has anyone been able to run these cartridges on the mega ste's or Falcon or is there any updated software that will allow these to work on these machines.

I can see the additional drives that the cartridge can add would be helpful for Falcon owners.

Just in case anyone doesn't know what these cartridges are, here are some details.

This is the BEST disk backup hardware available for the ST and can back up not just Atari disks. The cartridge takes over control of your floppy drives AND only needs ONE floppy drive, unlike blitz and syncro system hardware. It also verifies the data on the drive, making very accurate. Compare it to the blitz turbo hardware, which is very hit and miss!

Once you have got the parameters set for a specific disk, it will duplicate that disk EVERY time.

It also has the facility to read the disk into a file and takes advantage of you system memory.

Now that's the BASIC version or OPTION 0.

The other options, which can be added, are: pass through cartridge port, an extra 2 external floppy drives, real-time clock, and even able to use it as a Mac emulator (like the Spectre)."

Hallvard Tangeraas tells Steve:

"Wow! This sounds like something I need for a particular program I have which I dare not use since I can't make a backup copy of it. I had to spend quite a while to find someone selling it, and it's not supported any longer, so it's pretty irritating to say the least.

I've been thinking about making a "Blitz turbo" circuit just for this one disk, but reading the above makes me want to reconsider. Anyone got one of these for sale?"

'Phantomm' tells Hallvard:

"It's a really cool backup system. There were 2 versions that I know of one was Large and had options like a pass-thru port and etc that Steve explained.

And I think they made a small one without any of the options, about the size of a dongle. The Large one is the biggest Cart I've seen for the ST/STE, it's larger than the Spectre GCR cart.

I did have my large one up for sale at one time, but no one was interested and I have changed my mind about letting it go. These things were fairly expensive when they first came out.

If you want, you can e-mail me the name of the disk you need a backup of and I maybe able to tell you if it can be backed up by the Blitz Turbo or the Discovery Cart. Steve can probably tell ya as well."

Jamie Mann asks about checking memory in a 520/1040:

"How do I check the current amount of memory in one of the above beasties?

Managed to acquire one of each - both are working, and I have epic quantities of disks for both, but my previous experience of ye Atari ST is fairly limited (as in: I borrowed one about 5 years ago for a week, and played games on it).

I discovered a mini-faq thing, and by browsing it, discovered that the 1040 at least used 30-pin simms (and upon dismantling it discovered this to be true).

Is it worth upgrading it (if it hasn't been already) to the full 4 megs (as I have a bag full of 30 pin simms hanging around), or will none of the (5-boxes-of-floppy-disks) games take advantage of this epic amount of memory?"

Lyndon Amsdon tells Jamie:

"If the games are arcade style and pre 92 maybe 94 then they'll run on 1 meg fine and will not take advantage of 4mb (the official max on a ST).

You might as well put them in though, as it doesn't affect any games. (although one or two did have a problem, it's unlikely).

If you want to see what's in it, then check out a program like Mark Baines Profile (version 2 is the latest as far as I know)."

Peter West adds:

"I seem to remember there were some games that wouldn't run with more than 520 kB (or was it 1 MB?). There is a small PD program, FIGGY.PRG, which lets you restrict the usable memory to 1/2, 1 or 2 MB though."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - GameCube To Sell For $199!
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" More E3 News! 'Red Faction'!
'Blast Lacrosse'! 'Crazy Taxi'!
And much more!

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Nintendo To Sell GameCube For $199

Nintendo will undercut its competitors by $100, selling its upcoming GameCube video game console for $199, the company confirmed Monday.

Nintendo announced last week that the console will go on sale in the United States Nov. 5, three days before Microsoft brings out its Xbox. The Xbox will sell for $299, the same price as Sony's PlayStation 2.

Nintendo had been widely expected to come in below its two rivals on price, partly because the GameCube hardware is less complex and lacks features such as a hard drive or Ethernet ports. GameCube games will sell for $50 each, a Nintendo representative said, comparable to PlayStation 2 titles.

Along with the price advantage, Nintendo is counting on an array of games featuring exclusive Nintendo characters such as Pokemon and the Mario Brothers to maintain its market position with younger players and families. The GameCube will also connect with Nintendo's upcoming Game Boy Advance to transfer game content, marking the first time Nintendo has tried to leverage its dominance of handheld gaming.

"It's a big competitive advantage for them," Gartner analyst P.J. McNealy said of the GameCube price. "It's really going to help with the 8- to 15-year-old market, which has always been their strength. When kids start asking for a game machine, the price is going to help make that decision a lot easier for the parents."

Pricing is a critical decision for console makers because of the industry practice of depending on royalties and other revenue from software sales to subsidize hardware manufacturing costs. Microsoft will lose an estimated $125 on every Xbox it makes.

IDC analyst Schelley Olhava said Nintendo can afford to undercut Microsoft somewhat. "I don't think the unit is as expensive to manufacture as the Xbox," she said. "But nobody's been able to do a bill of goods on the GameCube to calculate what their expense is going to be. We can't really tell yet how much they'll be subsidizing the hardware."

E3: The Good, Bad and Inconsequential

Gone are the dancing dwarves and life-size PokØmon, but their legacy lives on...theoretically. Continual three-day barrages of strobe lights, blaring music and amply endowed hostesses aside, this year's Electronics Entertainment Expo featured a surprisingly tame array of interactive wonders. Although several hundred promising new products and three long-awaited console systems made their starring debut, groundbreaking titles were unfortunately few and far between during the video game showcase, which seemed dramatically scaled back from recent years.

Microsoft put forth a respectable first showing for its spiffy new Xbox,

which aims to bring PC gaming performance into the living room environment on November 8. The $300 machine is certain to garner critical, if not commercial acclaim, boasting unrivaled audio-visual and software processing capabilities. But while a surprisingly console-esque lineup including titles such as Dead or Alive 3, Oddworld: Munch’s Oddysee, Cel Damage and Blood Wake put on a commendable show, as did system-supporting bands Third Eye Blind and Blink-182, E3 consensus was the machine still lacks a "killer app" and all-important franchise characters.

Though Nintendo adopted a more laid-back approach, their GameCube (launching just three days before Xbox) and Game Boy Advance (launching next month) systems were equally well received. Sure to be seen as irresistibly compelling by diverse audiences, these machines nonetheless boasted only popular spinoffs such as Luigi’s Mansion, Super Smash Brothers Melee and Mario Kart Advance in playable form. Fans dying for a glimpse of fresh Metroid and Mario-centric products had to settle for some brief video footage and a promotional slant that emphasized Mario/Donkey Kong creator Shigeru Miyamoto’s new garden-themed strategy title, Pikmin, over other alternatives.

Meanwhile, Sega and Sony gladly let content do the talking. Both companies are highly focused on supporting current systems, including Sega’s virtually defunct Dreamcast hardware. Whereas Sony is bringing its muscle to bear behind the PlayStation 2 with a slew of never-before-seen and well-received first-party products like Dark Cloud and Twisted Metal Black, Sega instead opted for a cross-platform strategy. Gamers will actually be able to enjoy previously Dreamcast-exclusive titles such as Phantasy Star Online, Chu Chu Rocket and Space Channel 5 on multiple platforms inclouding Xbox, PS2, Game Cube and Game Boy Advance.

Still, with so many viable consumer outlets forthcoming, Hollywood predictably took notice of potential sales opportunities. That means TV and movie buffs suffering from severe game addictions will find three tough decisions ahead. First, which system to buy? Second, which titles to acquire? And third, why the heck should anyone pay top dollar at theaters for two measly hours of entertainment when day-consuming silver-screen goodies like these will soon be forthcoming:

* The Simpsons: Road Rage (Electronic Arts, Xbox)--Bart, Homer, Apu and friends tear up Springfield with wild vehicular antics, a la Crazy Taxi.
* Star Trek: Deep Space Nine: Dominion Wars (Simon & Schuster, PC)--A strategic romp played in real-time 3-D that tests starship captains’ mettle through good old fashioned tactical know-how.
* Aliens vs. Predator 2 (Vivendi Universal, PC)--Pissed-off space marine meets angry, carnivorous life form... much first-person gunplay ensues.
* Planet of the Apes (Fox Interactive, Dreamcast)--Solve puzzles, interact with mysterious characters, and monkey around for appearances’ sake.
* Top Gun (Titus, PS2/Game Boy Advance)--Kick the tires and light the fires as Maverick throughout a semi-realistic airborne combat campaign.
* Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone (Electronic Arts, PC/PlayStation/Game Boy Color/Game Boy Advance)--Play the young wizard in the first video game from the hit book series.
* Die Hard: Next Generation (Vivendi Universal, GameCube)--Yippie-ki-yay, mother@^#%*! That’s Hollywoodspeak for big explosions and even bigger, more action-packed gameplay potential.
* Antz Racing (Empire, PC/PS2)--Z and his miniscule friends burn rubber

in this pint-sized powerhouse of an arcade racer based on the feature film.

* From Dusk Till Dawn (Dreamcatcher, PC)--Set immediately following the movie’s conclusion, Seth Gecko has 72 hours to escape from jail, kill a few vampires, and party hearty like an action-adventure star.
* Robocop (Titus, PS2/Game Boy Advance)--Obey the prime action movie directive and blow criminals sky high in classic shoot ’em up style.
* COPS (Vivendi Universal, PS2/Xbox)--Journey on the wild side on a rollicking good adventure through America’s slums with the bad boys of law enforcement.
* Starsky & Hutch (Empire, PC/PS2)--A story based action arcade driving game, featuring two way cool white boys, one Ford Torino, and Huggy Bear’s streetwise grin.
* Die Hard: Nakatomi Plaza (Vivendi Universal, PC)--Forty floors of fresh office space must be cleansed of terrorist activity through gratuitous bloodshed.
* James Bond in Agent Under Fire (Electronic Arts, PS2)--Kill at will mayhem that takes place on foot or via moving car as players take on the role of the world’s favorite secret agent.
* Aliens: Colonial Marines (Electronic Arts, PS2)--Command a squad of four doomed space troopers who’re stuck deep in hostile, otherworldly territory populated by vicious man-eaters. Dinner’s served!
* Spider-Man: The Movie Game (Activision, PS2)--3-D wall-crawling, real-time action adventuring as the classic superhero turned movie star.
* Survivor: The Australian Outback Interactive Game (Infogrames, PC)--See if you can kill a wild pig and avoid killer crocs while outwitting, outlasting and outplaying the competition.

THQ Set to Release Red Faction for Playstation 2

THQ Inc. announced that its highly anticipated action title Red Faction for the Sony PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system will ship May 22.

Developed by THQ subsidiary, Volition Inc., the creators of Summoner, Red Faction delivers an adrenaline-pumping experience featuring intense action and an engaging story line built upon breakthrough technology.

Volition’s proprietary Geo-Mod engine allows players to alter, deform and outright destroy the game environment in real-time -- for the first time ever in video-game history. Red Faction is rated ‘‘M" for ‘‘Mature" by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board.

‘‘Red Faction is one of the key titles that will truly drive THQ’s next-generation market share in 2001," said Jeff Lapin, vice chairman and chief operating officer, THQ. ‘‘As an original THQ brand, Red Faction features all of the necessary ingredients for video-game success: revolutionary technology, a compelling story line and plenty of pure action."

‘‘Red Faction is the result of two and a half years of diligent effort and dedication," stated Mike Kulas, president, Volition Inc. ‘‘The game was on full display at this year’s Electronic Entertainment Expo, which is the perfect springboard to launch this second-generation PlayStation 2 title to market."

In Red Faction, players become immersed in a captivating rebellion on the hostile surface of Mars as they battle for freedom against the evil Ultor

Corporation. The game features a sophisticated physics engine, five fully controllable vehicles, intense graphics, and a variety of unique natural environments.

Red Faction is one of the most advanced and innovative action games of all time thanks to the revolutionary Geo-Mod engine that allows players to fully alter and destroy the game environment. The game will also be available this fall for PC. For more information about Red Faction, visit www.redfaction.com.

Activision Brings All-New Web-Swinging and Mutant Muscle To Nintendo’s Game Boy Color

Marvel’s legendary super heroes continue their unstoppable quest for justice with the release of two new action-adventure titles from Activision, Inc. for the Game Boy Color - Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six and X-Men: Wolverine’s Rage. The games, which have shipped to North American retail stores, carry a suggested retail price of $29.99 and have been rated ‘‘E" (‘‘Everyone" -- content suitable for persons six years or older) by the ESRB.

‘‘Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six and X-Men: Wolverine’s Rage feature the same super hero action that turned these Marvel characters into legends," said Larry Goldberg, executive vice president, Activision Worldwide Studios. ‘‘Together with the accessibility of the Game Boy Color platform, fans now have the freedom to fight villains anywhere."

Spider-Man 2: The Sinister Six is the sequel to the action-adventure game, Spider-Man. Players are the Web-swinging hero, using unique powers and attacks to thwart Doc Ock and his evil gang’s plan to defeat Spider-Man. Other old favorites like Scorpion, Sandman, Mysterio and Vulture join forces with the evil Doc to test Spider-Man’s strength, speed and smarts.

X-Men: Wolverine’s Rage is an all-new action-adventure game that lets players fight as Marvel’s legendary X-Man, Wolverine, in 20 levels of gut-wrenching excitement. Features include amazing attacks like ‘‘Bestial Rage" and mutant healing which enable Wolverine to survive the onslaught of enemies. Players battle it out with such foes as Cyber, Sabretooth and Lady Deathstrike in order to prevent an evil plan to liquefy Wolverine’s adamantium skeleton -- claws and all.

Acclaim Sports Ships ’Blast Lacrosse’ For PlayStation Game Console

Acclaim Sports announced that it has shipped Blast Lacrosse, the first ever lacrosse title in video game history, for the PlayStation game console.

Continuing the tradition of arcade-style sports games made popular for home console systems with the NBA JAM franchise, Blast Lacrosse will feature hard-hitting action with over-the-top, fast-paced game play.

‘‘Blast Lacrosse strengthens Acclaim Sports’ leadership position in the industry, by expanding the breadth and depth of our compelling sports lineup," said Steve Felsen, Senior Director of Brand Management for Acclaim Sports. ‘‘For the first time, players will get to experience the

intensely rugged excitement of indoor lacrosse via the advent of interactive entertainment."

Blast Lacrosse is officially licensed by the National Lacrosse League, the premier professional indoor lacrosse league, and features every National Lacrosse League team, as well as their players and mascots.

‘‘We are pleased to partner with Acclaim to bring the excitement of the National Lacrosse League to consumers for the first time in video game history," said Jim Jennings, the Commissioner of the National Lacrosse League.

Blast Lacrosse is a 5-on-5 arcade-style game with all the exciting stick-checks, open field collisions, and frantic, high-scoring action of professional indoor lacrosse. A pick-up-and-play control system with ‘‘Turbo" and ‘‘On Fire" modes allows players to check harder, run faster, shoot quicker and to perform incredible special moves. Real player attributes reflect each player’s speed, shot power, passing skill, shot accuracy and overall strength. Full game statistics highlight goals, assists, shots on goal, save percentage, body checks and time of possession.

Blast Lacrosse for the PlayStation game console retails for $29.95.

Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. Strengthens Its NINTENDO GAMECUBE Lineup for Fiscal 2002 With ’Crazy Taxi,’ ’18 Wheeler,’ ’Legends of Wrestling’ and ’Jeremy McGrath Supercross World’

Expanding upon its confirmed lineup of titles for the next-generation gaming platforms, Acclaim Entertainment, Inc. announced the additions of Crazy Taxi, 18 Wheeler, Legends of Wrestling and Jeremy McGrath Supercross World to its library of interactive offerings for the forthcoming Nintendo GameCube. The company will launch a total of 12 Nintendo GameCube titles within its fiscal 2002. Acclaim recently announced the release of four its premier franchise properties for the system at the E3 show in Los Angeles, including, All-Star Baseball 2002, Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2, XG3 Extreme Racing and NFL Quarterback Club 2002, which will be available during the initial launch of the hardware platform. The company has strategically focused its resources on the development of products for the next-generation gaming platforms and to that end, will have invested more than $100 million by the end of this year.

‘‘The additions to our Nintendo GameCube lineup further diversifies our product offerings and promises to engage and immerse a broad spectrum of consumers," said Gregory Fischbach, chief executive officer of Acclaim. ‘‘Whether arcade-style action or perennial gaming favorites such as professional wrestling, Acclaim possesses the brands and more importantly, the development studios to take full advantage of the power of the next-generation gaming platforms."

Crazy Taxi

Crazy Taxi is a mad race against the clock -- and traffic. As any of four fearless cabbies, players are driven by a single goal: to rack up the mega-bucks in fares and tips before their shift ends. Drivers pick up passengers and take them to their destination by any way possible. It’s a comic cab opera of collisions and decisions where courtesy takes a back seat to coin. In addition, the game features a powerful soundtrack by hit

bands Offspring and Bad Religion.

18-Wheeler American Pro Trucker

Based on AM2’s coin-op smash hit, 18-Wheeler American Pro Trucker delivers tons of big-rig fun, including Arcade Mode, Parking Challenge and Score Attack. In addition, split-screen 2-player Versus Mode, multiple raceways, five over-the-top drivers in their own unique rigs and several stages of twisted mini-games will haul home hours of highway action for players.

Legends of Wrestling

Developed by Acclaim Studios Salt Lake City, Legends of Wrestling harkens back to the yester-year of modern wrestling and features the grapplers that put wrestling on the map, including Bret ‘‘The Hitman" Hart, Jerry ‘‘The King" Lawler, Jake ‘‘The Snake" Roberts, Jimmy ‘‘Superfly" Snuka and George ‘‘The Animal" Steele. In addition, the game will feature for the first-time ever, in-depth match analysis and career guidance by Bobby ‘‘The Brain" Heenan and Captain Lou Albano; more than 12 bone-breaking match types: Ladder, Scaffold, Barbed-Wire, Three and Four-Way Dances, Six and Eight-Man Elimination Bouts plus special guest referees; linked moves for lethal combinations like never before with the press of a single button; and all-new Singles and Tag-Team career mode that bring you across the United States and all over the world.

Jeremy McGrath Supercross World

Developed by Acclaim Studios Salt Lake City, Jeremy McGrath’s Supercross World is exclusively endorsed by 10-time, world Supercross champion Jeremy McGrath and is a hybrid mix of sim and arcade racing action. Accompanying McGrath is ‘‘freestyle phenom" and 125 cc champion Travis Pastrana, as well as a plethora of other pro racers. Featuring 25 super-sized tracks, encompassing eight Outdoor National Tracks, five Baja Free-Ride Sections, four Freestyle Stunt Courses and eight Indoor Supercross Tracks; customizable bike and rider attributes, including acceleration, top speed, cornering and suspension for bikes, plus strength, slide, stability, and charisma for riders; Jeremy McGrath’s Supercross World will deliver incredible supercross action on the Nintendo GameCube.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Apple Starting to Ship Macs with OS X Installed

Apple Computer Inc. began shipping computers with its next-generation operating system installed as of Monday, about two months ahead of schedule, Chief Executive Steve Jobs said.

Apple has billed the OS X operating system as the biggest software overhaul for its flagship line of computers since the company launched its first

graphic-based system for the Macintosh in 1984.

‘‘We want to get this out there," Jobs told an enthusiastic crowd at the Cupertino, California-based company’s annual developers’ conference in San Jose. ‘‘We’re betting our future on X. This is a total commitment on Apple’s part."

Apple started selling OS X on a stand-alone basis in late March and had not planned to bundle the software with new computers until July but said it accelerated that timetable because of the positive response to the new system.

Every Mac shipped as of Monday will have both OS X and its predecessor OS 9.1 with a setting that will allow users to choose between the operating systems, Jobs said.

Jobs also urged developers to deliver so-called native software -- or software built on the new operating system -- to impatient Mac users.

‘‘The person that gets the native apps out the soonest may be the one who wins," said Jobs, noting that software makers Macromedia Inc. and FileMaker, Apple’s database software subsidiary, already have begun shipping products.

The company, which has a loyal following among graphics designers and other creative professionals, has taken steps to expand its share of the personal computer market from its current level of 5 percent. Part of that effort is a plan to open 25 retail stores in the United States this year.

Apple said its first two retail outlets posted stronger-than-expected sales and customer traffic figures during their first weekend of operation.

The stores in Glendale, California, and McLean, Virginia, attracted 7,700 visitors and sold a combined total of $599,000 in merchandise.

‘‘We were blown away with the numbers," Jobs said.

The company on Monday also introduced its new Mac OS X server and said it had begun shipping WebObjects 5, Apple’s application server for Web publishing and enterprise application development.

High Court to Decide Internet Pornography Law

The U.S. Supreme Court said on Monday it would hear a Justice Department appeal aimed at allowing the federal government to enforce a 1998 law intended to protect minors from Internet pornography.

The justices agreed to review whether a U.S. appeals court properly barred the law’s enforcement on constitutional free-speech grounds because it relies on community standards to identify online material harmful to minors.

Returning to an issue that pits free-speech rights against efforts by Congress to protect minors from online pornography, the high court will hear arguments and then issue its decision during its term that begins in October.

The Child Online Protection Act, adopted by Congress and signed by then-President Bill Clinton in 1998, would require commercial site operators on the World Wide Web to impose electronic proof-of-age systems before allowing Internet users to view material deemed harmful to minors.

First-time violators would face up to six months in prison and a $50,000 fine.

The law, which has never been enforced, was immediately challenged on First Amendment grounds by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and 17 groups and business, including online magazine publishers and booksellers.

Congress came up with the law in a new effort to regulate access by minors to Internet pornography after the Supreme Court in 1997 struck down the Communications Decency Act of 1996.

A federal judge issued a preliminary injunction on the grounds that the law violated free-speech rights, saying site operators had no effective way of screening out minors and ruling that the law probably was fatally flawed.

The appeals court upheld the injunction. It specifically objected to the law's reliance on ''contemporary community standards" and said Web site operators would be unable to determine the geographic location of site visitors using a worldwide computer network.

To comply with the law, operators would have to severely censor their Web sites or would have to adopt age or credit card verification systems to shield minors from material deemed harmful ''by the most puritan of communities in any state," the appeals court said.

Acting Solicitor General Barbara Underwood of the Justice Department said in the Supreme Court appeal the case involved the scope of Congress' power to protect minors from sexually explicit online material.

She said the appeals court has perhaps fatally restricted the power of Congress to address ''that serious problem" and called the ruling ''dramatic and extraordinary in its scope."

Adult verification services that cost $16.95 a year represent an acceptable ''price to pay for protecting children from the harmful effects of graphic pornographic images," she said.

ACLU lawyer Ann Beeson replied that the appeal should be denied. She said the appeals court correctly held that the law would suppress a large amount of speech on the Web that adults are entitled to communicate and receive.

She said the criminal penalties would apply to millions of commercial content providers. A Web site operator could be found guilty for a single description or image on a Web page, and the law would cover Web-based chat rooms and discussion groups.

As an alternative to the law, concerned parents could use blocking or filtering technology to shield children from online pornography, Beeson said.

In a statement, Beeson said, ''We welcome the opportunity to demonstrate to the court that Congress has once again fundamentally misunderstood the nature of the Internet."

She added, ''How else can you explain a law that makes criminals of our

clients, who include the poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, writers of sexual advice columns and Web sites for a bookstore, an art gallery and the Philadelphia Gay News, to name a few."

House Committee Scales Back Internet Spam Bill

A House committee scaled back legislation on Thursday that aims to curb junk e-mail, cutting out provisions that would allow consumers to sue companies that ignored requests to be taken off their mailing lists.

The House Judiciary Committee also added a measure that would require pornographic messages to be labeled as such, allowing consumers to delete the messages without opening them if they so desired.

The bill, which passed on a voice vote after lengthy debate, bears more resemblance to another introduced by Virginia Republican Bob Goodlatte than the version approved by the Energy and Commerce committee in March.

Goodlatte, who sits on the Judiciary Committee, said he was pleased with how the bill turned out, while bill sponsor Heather Wilson, a New Mexico Republican, released a statement objecting to the changes.

The bill now moves to the Rules Committee, which will try to reconcile the two versions.

Both bills attempt to curb unsolicited commercial e-mail, commonly known as ‘‘spam." Internet users and access companies complain that spam clogs inboxes and computer networks with offers for everything from credit cards to pornography.

Judiciary Committee members said Wilson’s bill would encourage frivolous lawsuits, give too much power to Internet providers and make it difficult for legitimate businesses to communicate with their customers.

‘‘These provisions are disproportionate to the harm or damage caused by spam," said committee chairman James Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican.

Sensenbrenner and other committee members said they would rather boost Internet access providers’ ability to block spam than try to regulate online commerce.

As such, the bill they passed would require spammers to use legitimate return address so access providers could identify and block unwanted e-mail more readily. In addition, access providers would be allowed to sue spammers for up to $1 million plus attorneys’ fees.

The committee also approved a measure requiring pornographic messages to be labeled despite concerns that it might run afoul of existing obscenity laws.

A similar amendment that sought to label all spam was voted down.

Massachusetts Democrat Barney Frank said he thought the new bill did not go far enough to protect consumers, even if spam rarely amounted to little more than an annoyance.

‘‘Excessive noise can be an annoyance. Second-hand smoke can be an annoyance," Frank told Reuters. ‘‘People think the Internet is the most delicate flower in the world, and it must be put under glass."

New Suit Filed to Bar Trading Music on Net

Continuing their legal attack on Internet companies that they say are stealing their music, the major recording companies filed a copyright infringement lawsuit against Aimster.

Continuing their legal attack on Internet companies that they say are stealing their music, the major recording companies filed a copyright infringement lawsuit yesterday against Aimster, a service that permits users of instant messaging services to exchange music and other files.

The lawsuit, filed in Federal District Court in Manhattan, asserts that Aimster aids copyright infringement by permitting users to exchange copyrighted music files freely over the Internet.

"This is Napster all over again," said Cary Sherman, general counsel of the Recording Industry Association of America. The trade group sued on behalf of four major labels, BMG, EMI, Universal and Sony, while a fifth, AOL Time Warner, sued separately, Mr. Sherman said.

Johnny Deep, the founder and chief executive of Aimster, based in Cohoes, N.Y., disputed the accusation. He said his service should not be compared to Napster because it permits users to trade files through private message exchanges.

Aimster is often used in conjunction with other services, like AOL’s Instant Messenger. With Aimster, the participants can send files back and forth to each other’s hard drives, effectively attaching a file to their message.

About a million people use the service each day, Mr. Deep said. It has become a popular way to exchange music files, particularly in light of the struggles of Napster, which has been ordered by a federal court in California to prevent users from exchanging copyrighted music files.

Mr. Deep said his service was "not a music sharing service," but a private network used to exchange all kinds of information. He said it was not the "right or responsibility" of Aimster to track what sorts of files its users exchange.

"We guarantee the privacy of your messages and parcels," he said. He added that the company sued the recording industry association on April 30 in Federal District Court in Syracuse, asking the court to declare that its activities did not violate copyright law. "We want to know how far we should go in breaching privacy in order to monitor potential infringement" of copyright, Mr. Deep said.

AOL Raises Price for Unlimited Service

AOL has announced that it is raising its price for unlimited access for the

first time in three years, making the most popular Internet service provider also one of the most expensive for unlimited dial-up access.

The company says it will raise the price of its unlimited use plan by US$1.95 to $23.90 beginning in the July billing cycle. AOL has more than 29 million subscribers, the "vast majority" of whom are on the unlimited plan, spokeswoman Ann Brackbill told NewsFactor Network.

AOL also has several million broadband subscribers, but the company does not offer detailed breakdowns of its subscriber base.

The nearly $50 million in additional revenue that could be collected as a result of the price increase would be a relative drop in the bucket for the world's largest media company, which last quarter reported revenue of $9.1 billion, up from $8.3 billion a year earlier.

AOL says the "modest price increase" will help fund continued improvements in its service and the release of AOL 7.0 later this year. AOL 7.0 promises increased integration of local and broadband content and new advancements in popular AOL destinations such as personal finance, entertainment and news and sports, the company said.

AOL's closest competitor, Microsoft's MSN, charges $21.95 for basic unlimited dial-up access, and is currently throwing in a free copy of MS Money, along with free video rental coupons from Blockbuster, for new customers. Microsoft is a distant second to AOL however, with just 5 million subscribers.

The third-largest ISP in the U.S., EarthLink, remains almost $4 cheaper per month than AOL, with EarthLink unlimited dial-up available for $19.95. EarthLink, with 4.8 million subscribers, trails MSN only slightly in popularity.

The AOL price hike comes at a time when Internet service providers (ISPs) are going to great lengths to attract new customers. Microsoft's offer of free software and movie rentals comes amid recent AOL promotions that include first crack at tickets to Madonna concerts and giveaways of American Airlines AAdvantage miles.

Microsoft could gain some ground, however, through a recent deal with Handspring that will make MSN the home page for wireless Web browsers using Handspring access software. Not to be outdone in the frequent-flier-miles category, Microsoft is offering United Airlines frequent flier miles to customers who switch.

Earlier, in a sales promotion that other ISPs have since abandoned, Microsoft had sought to gain new customers through computer rebates.

Though EarthLink is close on Microsoft's heels, it has yet to adopt MSN's aggressive giveaway approach. The company has partnered with long-distance provider Sprint to offer customers a flat price for unlimited Internet access and state-to-state long distance.

EarthLink Chief Executive Gary Betty recently said that he sees his company more as a gateway to the Internet than a conduit to proprietary content, as AOL and MSN have become.

Upstart Web Browsers Battle the Giants

Tired of Microsoft? Bored with AOL? Contrary to popular belief, you have alternatives to the Big 2 Web browsers, and the infidels are making inroads against the rulers of Web access, Microsoft Corporation and AOL Time Warner.

The upstart browsers are targeted at those who are of an independent mind and want something smaller, simpler and faster than the Big 2's mass-market browsers for their PCs, and at users who own one of the proliferating range of non-PC, Internet-enabled devices -- machines too small to cram in a 20MB browser.

Partly because of the ever-changing ways in which people are accessing the Internet and partly because of blunders and general stodginess on the part of Microsoft's Internet Explorer and AOL's Netscape, alternative browsers have begun to carve out successful niches.

Opera Software, leader of the alternatives, has been making its small, fast browser since 1994, and markets it for PCs, network appliances and "smart" phones.

The Oslo, Norway-based company has made a series of deals in the last couple of years, the latest of which made the biggest splash. Earlier this month, Opera revealed a deal to supply IBM's Internet appliance, NetVista, with browser software.

The company has similar contracts with Advanced Micro Devices, Ericsson, Psion and Be.

"Signing with IBM is a major breakthrough for Opera Software," said Opera CEO Jon S. Von Tetzchner.

Last year, the company began offering a free, advertising-supported version of its browser, and company officials claim that as many as 25,000 copies a day have been downloaded since January. The company also said that paid licenses have doubled for those wanting to trade in the free version for the US$39 ad-free version.

A group of developers in Australia plan to release a browser called "No Limits" later this year under a GNU General Public License. According to its developers, it will be capable of supporting two "rendering engines," the code that enables a Web page to be displayed.

Users will be able to choose the engine that displays the Web page fastest or with the most compatibility. The browser is free and is scheduled to be released in November.

Even the hackers are getting in on the action. The hacking collective known as the "Cult of the Dead Cow" plans to unveil another "no-limits" browser at July's DefCon hacker convention in Las Vegas.

The browser allegedly can bypass Internet censorship by using peer-to-peer technology similar to music file-sharing platforms like Napster and Gnutella.

If Microsoft and Netscape are being nudged aside in some circles, they have only themselves to blame. Both have had difficulty scaling down their massive browser software to fit into the smaller trends.

Microsoft supplies the MSN Explorer browser for some Compaq Computer and Emachines Internet appliances, and has had some success getting browser software into cell phones, but reviews have been mixed as to their viability.

AOL's Mozilla project is geared toward non-PC devices, but so far it has resulted only in Netscape 6, which was roundly criticized last year for being released before it was ready.

AOL is currently developing technology code-named Komodo which is expected to debut in AOL 7 later this year. The company has had limited success getting the Netscape brand into cell phones.

Finding Free Internet Access for Those Without

For many low-income students, Internet access disappears when summer begins. Now, a group of nonprofit organizations are working to keep those students connected.

Prodded by high-profile efforts to close the gap between students with access to technology and students without, 98 percent of the countrys public schools have been wired for Internet connections. But for many low-income students, that access disappears once schools close their doors for the summer.

Now, a group of nonprofit organizations are working to keep those students connected during their summer vacations by building and distributing a directory in both English and Spanish - of more than 20,000 locations nationwide that offer free Internet access.

The ConnectNet database, searchable by zip code, provides information about free Internet access at libraries and other community technology centers. The database listings are linked to mapping software that delivers detailed maps showing the locations of free access points in a given area. ConnectNet, and its Spanish language counterpart Conectado, also operates a toll-free telephone number -- (866) 583-1234 -- to provide the information to those without Internet access.

"This is really the first site of its kind to plot out community technology centers," said Andy Carvin, coordinator of the directory project and a senior associate at the Washington, D.C.-based Benton Foundation. The Kaiser Family Foundation is promoting the effort through a serious of television advertisements, directed at teenagers, that will air in English and Spanish throughout the summer.

"The summer is a key time to get this message out to kids," said Virginia Witt, senior program officer for the Kaiser Family Foundation, which has produced a series of public service announcements for the Internet campaign. "We're trying to reach those low-income, disadvantaged kids who are disconnected from technology."

A handful of nonprofit organizations that had been working separately to build individual databases combined their work to produce ConnectNet. The bulk of free Internet access sites are housed in about 16,000 public libraries throughout the country. The remaining locations are at community technology centers -- some of which are sponsored by the Departments of Education, Commerce and Housing and Urban Development.

Commerce Department studies examining the digital divide have found that low-income individuals without computers or Internet access in their homes frequently take advantage of free Internet access at their local libraries and community technology centers.

Since ConnectNet launched in late March, the *(Digital Divide Network,)* which houses the database, has seen a four-fold increase in users visiting its Web site -- up to 3,000 visitors a day.

Local libraries are bracing for an influx of students over the summer months by offering programs targeted toward kids, such as book clubs and mini courses on how to better use the Internet.

"There is a recognition that in the summer, there are more kids around," said Emily Sheketoff, executive director of the American Library Association’s Washington office. "We do try and bring more people into the library, kids who have nowhere else to go." The only drawback, Sheketoff said, is that libraries, like schools, are facing a shortage of computers and high-speed Internet access to meet the demand.

"One of our biggest problems is we don’t have enough," she said. "There are not enough terminals or bandwidth."

In addition to library-sponsored programs, America Online’s AOL@School is creating a virtual summer camp. It will offer activities aimed at kids, such as volunteer opportunities, summer safety tips and family activities, and free teacher training on how to make full use of the Internet. AOL also is offering operators at its call center in Northern Virginia to staff the toll-free ConnectNet number.

The AOL Time Warner Foundation has made "a big grassroots push to make sure every place that touches kids knows about this," said foundation Vice President B. Keith Fulton. "Anybody who has technology centers is reaching out. Really for the kids we’re trying to reach, we’re going through TV and other popular community centers."

Iomega Unveils High-Capacity Portable Drive System

Data storage company Iomega Corp. on Thursday unveiled a portable disk drive system that can hold massive quantities of music and data and fits in a jacket pocket.

Roy, Utah-based Iomega, known for its Zip and Jaz drives and disks, said that it was now shipping its Peerless system, a standalone, peripheral drive that comes in 10 gigabyte and 20 gigabyte capacities, greater than that of DVD- or CD-writeable disks.

The two-piece system includes a disk roughly the size of a handheld computer or PDA, which slips into a vertical docking station. The drive will sell for about $250 while the disks will retail at $160 for 10 gigabytes and $200 for 20 gigabytes. Combined packages will be discounted, Iomega said.

Encouraged by the growth of gadgets that let consumers tote contact lists and scheduling information in one handheld device, Iomega launched Peerless as a means for users to quickly carry and share large-scale files between

destinations.

For example, a user at an office workstation would could save a corporate application, hundreds of MP3 files, and graphics onto the drive and easily take it home and download the information.

Iomega is also working on internal versions that, for example, would fit in television set-top boxes and in cars, giving users the ability to save, or back up, prized data, as well as expand the capacity of devices such as personal video recorder and digital music players.

‘‘I could save my office files and my MP3 music to Peerless, and plug it into a system in my car and listen to my music while I drive," explained Iomega senior vice president of marketing Doug Collier. ‘‘Then, at home, I plug it into my computer and I finish my work, until I plug it into my set-top box, where I download a movie and save it to the same disk."

‘‘We are looking at Peerless as a way to bridge the spectrum of data management," he said.

Iomega said it worked with International Business Machines Corp. to develop the hard drive.

The company said it has a backlog of about 25,000 units. It will begin to ship drives this week to those who ordered early, and the models will hit retail store shelves in late June.

The Peerless systems was originally discussed under the tenure of Bruce Albertson, who resigned on Monday over differences with the board of directors about the long-term direction of the company. Albertson is the second CEO to leave the company in less than two years.

Intel Set To Roll Out Itanium Chips

Putting an end to all the speculation and rumors, Intel will announce next week that production versions of the 64-bit Itanium chip are shipping. It’s the first step in the chp maker’s effort to shake up the market for high-end servers.

At long last, Intel will lift the veil of silence next week from its Itanium chip, setting off a new round of competition in the market for servers and advanced workstation PCs.

Intel on Tuesday will announce that it has started shipping of production versions of the 64-bit chip, according to sources familiar with Intel’s plans. Itanium workstations and servers will begin hitting the market as soon as next month, the sources said.

Itanium is the first step in Intel’s effort to shake up the market for high-end servers, currently dominated by Sun Microsystems, which uses its own expensive Reduced Instruction Set Computing (RISC) chips. Itanium machines are expected to cost considerably less than traditional Unix servers sold by Sun and others, giving the chip giant a wedge to get businesses to switch.

Intel, which requires computer makers to adhere to a web of stringent nondisclosure agreements on "unannounced" products, will lift those

restrictions pertaining to Itanium products on Tuesday, the sources said. Once the curtain comes up, a number of PC makers, including Dell Computer and Hewlett-Packard, will engage in an Itanium free-for-all to show support for the chip.

HP will, for example, ship three new Itanium products--a workstation and two servers--in the near future. Dell already announced plans to begin selling its first Itanium server this summer.

To date, the chipmaker, through sampling and pilot programs, has shipped about 40,000 Itanium chips.

Initially, Intel expects eight to 10 PC makers to announce products based on the chip. It also expects 20 to 60 applications. Currently, Itanium will work with seven operating systems, including the HP-UX and IBM’s AIX-5L versions of Unix, Microsoft’s Windows and 64-bit versions of Linux from Red Hat, Caldera, SuSE and TurboLinux.

Over the course of the year, Intel expects another 15 computer manufacturers to pick up Itanium, for a total of 25 companies shipping about 35 models. Over the course of the year, Intel expects developers to announce many more applications, for a total of about 400, an Intel representative said.

HP, for example, will ship three new products in the near future, including a dual-processor i2000 workstation and four- and 16-processor models of the HP Server rx, said Mark Hudson, worldwide marketing manager for HP severs. Meanwhile, Dell has said it will begin selling its first Itanium server this summer. IBM is expected to ship one server and one Intellistation workstation fitted with Itanium. Compaq and Gateway are also expected to ship Itanium servers.

The new machines will cost more than servers using Intel’s current Pentium III Xeon chip. However, Intel insists customers who budget for the extra cost over and above a Pentium III system will receive added performance and reliability.

Analysts say that despite multiple delays, Itanium has aged well for the most part.

"Given how late the chip is, its performance, especially on technical applications, is still pretty impressive," said Nathan Brookwood, principal analyst at researcher Insight 64. The chip will provide the largest performance increases for floating point-intensive applications, such as graphic art programs and computer-aided design, he said.

Meanwhile, when it comes to other applications, "Intel does have some room for improvement," Brookwood said.

Itanium systems are expected to cost less than traditional Unix servers or workstations, including those based on RISC chips, such as on HP’s PA-RISC or Sun Microsystems’ UltraSPARC III-based Sun Fire servers and Sun Blade workstations.

Initial price lists indicated that the chip would range in cost from $4,227 for an 800MHz Itanium with 4MB of performance-enhancing tertiary cache memory to over $3,500 for a 733MHz Itanium with 2MB of tertiary cache.

While the 4MB version will cost the same, the lower-end models will cost

less. For workstations, Itaniums running at 733MHz and containing 2MB of cache memory will sell for between $1,000 and $2,000, or in the range of Intel's current Xeon chips. Judging by Intel's pricing history, the 800MHz Itanium with 2MB cache will likely have a similar price.

Analysts believe Itanium will cause companies that sell RISC/Unix workstations and servers to readjust their product lines. For HP, IBM and Compaq, all of which offer both Intel and RISC-based workstations and servers, this will require product line juggling. However, Sun and other RISC-only server makers might have to cook up lower-priced offerings. Otherwise, "they're going to find they're going to lose a lot of low-end business to these Itanium boxes," Brookwood said.

Many factors make Itanium different from the Pentiums that came before. Itanium was designed to address a larger amount of memory, which helps to speed applications such as databases, and also to perform more work per clock cycle than a standard Intel chip, such as the Pentium 4. Itanium does this extra work by dividing and processing larger chunks of data in parallel.

Adding performance with new features that increase reliability, Intel says, will decrease the cost of maintaining servers and workstations.

The added bang for the buck could shake things up in the server market, though a massive initial impact from Itanium is unlikely, given the typical reluctance of companies to adopt new and unproven technologies.

Instead, Itanium's early adopters will likely be a small number of companies that are after immediate performance gains. These customers, which include Motorola, Wells Fargo and Lycos, are likely to be running Web security applications, mining data, maintaining large databases or doing scientific computing.

Intel maintains that for applications such as scientific computing, the chip can "bring the economics of IA (Intel architecture) with the performance of what you've seen in supercomputers," said Lisa Hambrick, director of marketing for the Itanium processor family at Intel. "I certainly think that end users who wants that capability will deploy it right away."

She acknowledged that for other market segments, Itanium will take longer to get rolling. "But they will grow more over time," she said. "It's not like a desktop launch where everything goes on Day 1."

HP's server business sees the new chip creating its own economy. Its introduction gives HP the opportunity to offer services such as consulting to customers releasing new servers based on the new chip. Over a period of as many as five years, HP executives said, the company will be able to consolidate its servers on Itanium, which will help it to reduce costs.

For Intel, the chip is the beginning of what it hopes will be a long-running family of workstation and server chips. Though work continues on future versions of the chip, it's also the end of a protracted initial development process. Many people at Intel, and co-developer HP, will breathe a sigh of relief when the curtain raises on the chip, which has been more than seven years in the making.

"Just like any new technology, it's going to take several years to establish (itself) in the market," said HP's Hudson. "The first generation will be...targeted at early adopters."

Brookwood agreed. "I think it’s going to take another six to 12 months before people begin ordering these" in any kind of numbers, he said. "I think McKinley (a follow-on version of the first Itanium) is going to be the volume play."

Intel spins it a little differently. Instead of acting as a stepping-stone for faster, future versions of the Itanium, this first chip will create a foundation for 64-bit computing, an Intel representative said.

Though even higher-performing chips will follow, including McKinley and other new versions code-named Madison and Deerfield, still others wait in the wings. Intel plans to ship pilot versions of its McKinley chip at the end of the year, with the first production systems coming in 2002. That chip is expected to debut at gigahertz or higher speeds.

After the launch of the first chip, which had been known by the code name Merced, Intel says the Itanium family should continue to evolve for up to 25 years.

Got Something Bad To Say? Go to a Chat Room

A U.S. District Court has dismissed a defamation suit and issued an accompanying order that Global Telemedia International (GTMI) pay the attorneys’ fees for individuals the company sued over Internet message board postings. The action may set the stage for broader protection of those who post jibes on the Web.

The court’s ruling that the postings of Barry King and Ron Reader on a Raging Bull message board were protected free speech on a public issue may discourage the aggressive pursuit of Web posters critical of corporations, according to legal observers.

"The trend is that Internet speakers are becoming more aware of their rights," Megan Gray, the Los Angeles attorney who defended Reader, told NewsFactor Network.

The defamation suit filed by GTMI, a Newport Beach, California-based telecommunications company, argued that statements made by Reader and Stevens, who posted under different names on Raging Bull’s GTMI message board, were defamatory.

The court, however, dismissed the suit earlier this year, applying legislation known as Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPP), and ruled last week that GTMI must also pay the defendants’ legal fees, which total more than $55,000.

Attorney Gray told NewsFactor that the case marks the first time a company has had to pay legal fees in such a case, and may help discourage companies in their aggressive fight against critical Web postings.

"The large attorney-fee award may stem the hundreds of ’cyber gag’ lawsuits being filed around the country to stifle Internet speech expressing negative opinions about matters of public interest, like poor corporate performance," said a statement from Gray’s firm, Baker & Hostetler LLP.

While free speech and legal groups have warned of the growing number of suits that seek to disclose the identity of Web posters and pursue defamation claims, they say the tide may be turning.

"[This case] is going to discourage [frivolous lawsuits] because many of these cyber SLAPP or cyber gag suits are violations of free speech," Gray said. "The law does permit a company to file a frivolous lawsuit solely to obtain subpoena power. The companies that pursue these look bad."

Attorneys and groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the Electronic Frontier Foundation are also increasingly defending Web posters and their identities, Gray said, adding that many message boards also now contain more information on rights of expression.

Gray, who said her client's Web postings critical of GTMI were also defensible as the truth, said many of the corporations that pursue defamation suits involving Web postings are finding the courts unfriendly.

"The courts, once presented with the facts and the evidence and the laws, recognize these lawsuits for what they are, which is an intimidation tactic," she told NewsFactor.

In the GTMI case, the courts ruled that the postings were opinion, not statements of fact, and that as such, the validity of the statements could not be proven one way or the other.

"The reasonable reader, looking at the hundreds and thousands of postings about the company from a wide variety of posters, would not expect that the defendant was airing anything other than his personal views of the company and its prospects," wrote Judge David Carter in his ruling.

Somebody's Watching You: The Web's Secret Police

Because software piracy and online fraud can cost companies millions in profits and lost goodwill -- and because government agencies do not have the resources to keep pace with cybercriminals -- many high-tech companies have formed their own investigative units to catch Internet con artists.

For conventional law enforcement, business crimes are simply "lower on the totem pole" than murder and personal injury, according to Sean Walsh, deputy counsel for the New York City Inspector General's Office.

Walsh told the E-Commerce Times that some large law enforcement agencies are reaching out to the private sector because of the tremendous amount of manpower required to investigate high-tech crimes.

"I think there is a symbiotic relationship," said Walsh, who is also president of the High Technology Crime Investigative Association (HTCIA).

One company that has been aggressive in tracking down pirates who use the Web to sell counterfeit software is Microsoft. The Redmond, Washington-based corporate giant began strengthening its Internet anti-piracy efforts about three years ago, according to Microsoft corporate attorney Tim Cranton.

"The anonymity and broad access of the Internet makes online fraud a serious issue worldwide that causes both consumer and economic harm,"

Cranton told the E-Commerce Times.

According to Cranton, test purchases made by Microsoft indicate that over 90 percent of the Microsoft software sold online is counterfeit or infringes upon the company’s intellectual property rights.

Over the past two years, Microsoft has worked with Internet service providers (ISPs) and major online auction houses to take down more than 88,000 online auctions and Internet sites offering illegal and/or counterfeit Microsoft software worldwide, Cranton said.

"Sophisticated counterfeit product is the work of savvy and well-funded criminals who understand that software counterfeiting represents a low legal risk and very high profits -- relative to other more nefarious criminal endeavors like drug running," Cranton said.

To combat online piracy, Microsoft uses software that scans the Internet 24 hours a day looking for Internet sites or auctions offering illicit copies of its products. The scanning software has helped Microsoft investigators identify more than 500 illegal sites in a single day, the company said.

Once Microsoft targets a potential pirate, the company will make a test buy to determine whether the software being offered is in fact counterfeit. Next, Microsoft sends a cease-and-desist letter requesting that the alleged pirate stop selling counterfeit software. At that time, Microsoft also notifies the hosting ISP or Internet auction of the proposed sale of counterfeit software.

"Microsoft has found that the notices sent to ISPs and auctions sites regarding illegal activity on Web sites have been effective and sites are promptly shut down," Cranton said. "Legal actions are a last resort, but sometimes necessary in cases where the distribution of illegitimate software on the Internet persists."

Online auction houses have also stepped up their efforts to catch scam artists. According to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Internet auction fraud is the No. 1 con game on the Net.

About three years ago, eBay started up its own investigative unit to review complaints against users of its site, eBay spokesperson Kevin Pursglove told the E-Commerce Times.

The unit was created, according to Pursglove, to "address issues being raised by our users and to be proactive and reach out to law enforcement."

How eBay proceeds with a consumer complaint of fraud depends on the case, Pursglove said. In deciding how to go forward, the company considers factors such as the number of complaints received about a particular user and the dollar amounts involved.

If the company receives a single complaint about a transaction, and both the buyer and the seller have had positive feedback posted by other eBay users, chances are the company will encourage the parties to work the dispute out. However, if a large number of eBay users complain about one person failing to deliver as promised, then eBay is likely to bring in law enforcement.

In addition to auction fraud cases that involve non-delivery, eBay also

investigates cases of shill bidding, or cases in which an individual or a group of individuals artificially inflate online auction bids.

Although Pursglove declined to comment on cases currently investigated by eBay, it was reported in April that the auction giant was investigating an alleged fraud involving the sale of over $400,000 in gold and silver coins and bullion, which were allegedly never delivered to winning bidders after payment was received.

Pursglove said that only one out of every 40,000 auctions on eBay is fraudulent.

Once a company has gathered evidence to substantiate a misdeed, it’s time to call the cops.

"We have no power to arrest," Pursglove said. "All we can do is cooperate with law enforcement."

Walsh said that most large-scale law enforcement agencies, including the FBI, review the data gathered by companies in piracy cases and then make their own test buys to confirm the reported piracy.

In some instances, according to Walsh, the agencies will request financial assistance from the company involved to make a buy because the law enforcement agency has no money in its budget to purchase counterfeit software.

Companies might choose to bring civil suits against suspected pirates, instead of pursuing criminal action, because the civil penalties are "far more effective," according to Walsh.

Microsoft corporate attorney Mary Jo Schrade told the E-Commerce Times recently that a single, intentional copyright violation could cost a violator a $150,000 fine and that the willful violation of one trademark could carry a $1 million penalty. However, intellectual property attorneys agree that penalties in those ranges are rarely awarded for intellectual property infringements.

Although some organizations are eager to talk about their investigative efforts, others are more reticent.

"We don’t talk about those kinds of things," spokesperson Bill Curry of Amazon.com told the E-Commerce Times when asked about the Internet behemoth’s online investigative efforts.

Amazon’s loose-lips-sink-ships policy underscores how, even as more is revealed about private investigations on the Web, a great deal of online policing remains secret.

HP Launches Product-recycling Program

Joining a growing group of companies in the electronics industry, Hewlett-Packard announced on Monday a fee-based service that allows consumers and businesses to recycle unwanted computers and related products.

The service, part of HP’s Planet Partners program, will accept the

equipment regardless of the manufacturer for a fee ranging from $13 to $34. People will be able to purchase the service online at the Environment section of HP’s Web site, the company said.

The announcement puts HP in sync with a movement among computer makers to take back obsolete equipment from consumers in the United States, riding a wave of current and pending legislation in Europe and elsewhere mandating programs along these lines. The efforts mark governments and industry coming to grips with the rapid obsolescence of electronics equipment, which has become the fastest-growing component of municipal waste.

HP will launch the service in Europe on June 1, tailored to individual countries. Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Italy already require manufacturer-financed take-back programs, the company said.

A key issue for manufacturers has been the costs involved in take-back programs, something that the fee is intended to address. No one is yet sure how consumers will respond to a request that they pay to throw away their old computers, printers and the like.

"There’s a pretty high overhead cost," said Renee St. Denis, environmental business unit manager at HP. "There’s also the issue of, do all customers want this service?"

IBM launched a similar recycling initiative in November, in which consumers can get rid of any manufacturer’s computer equipment for $29.99. Sony Electronics has a no-cost drop-off program that is limited to its own products and to the state of Minnesota. Retailer Best Buy this summer plans to begin a recycling program that will involve a fee.

Palo Alto, Calif.-based HP drew praise from waste watchers in the state. The technology giant has its recycling facility in Roseville, Calif., and plans to open a similar recycling site in Nashville, Tenn., in July.

"It’s a very good start toward solving the electronics management issue we’re facing," said Mark Kennedy, a technical adviser for the California Integrated Waste Management Board. "I like the sliding scale of fees. I like also that they’re handling all the materials right here in California or the U.S., rather than shipping them overseas."

Still, he said, the fee could put a crimp in consumers’ acceptance of the program.

Recycling is not new at HP. Like IBM, Dell Computer and others, it has long had a program for handling its own end-of-life equipment.

"The difference is in the investment HP has made in understanding" the full scale of handling obsolete electronic products, St. Denis said. "We know for sure what happens to ours. Nothing ends up in landfills or exported."

HP has also been taking back spent cartridges for its laser and ink-jet printers for about a decade.

The program that goes into effect Monday will accept a wide range of goods, including PCs of various shapes and sizes, printers, monitors, scanners, PDAs (personal digital assistants) and routers. Pricing will depend on the quantity and type of product being returned. At the low end of the scale would be small personal printers, and at the high end, monitors and large laser printers.

The equipment will first be evaluated to see if it can be reused, and functional devices will be donated to charitable organizations or sent through other reuse channels. The remaining equipment will be recycled through a procedure, in cooperation with Micro Metallics, a subsidiary of mining company Noranda, to recover as much usable and potentially toxic materials as possible.

HP’s Roseville facility processes up to 4 million pounds per month of used equipment from the computer maker and its corporate customers.

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